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24 MAR 1980

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MEMORANDUM FOR:



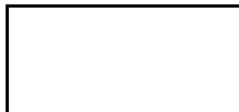
FROM:

DCI

There will be a meeting with Ambassador West sometime this next week. The NSC is setting it up.

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THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE
17 March 1980

Claim 300,000 flee

Rebels say Soviets kill 40,000

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan [AP]—As many as 40,000 Afghans have been killed and 300,000 forced to leave their homes because of "Soviet bombing and other atrocities," a rebel group charged Sunday.

The claims by the Harkata Inqilabi Islami [Movement for Islamic Revolution] could not be independently confirmed, and the numbers appeared to be exaggerated, even though refugees who fled into Pakistan from eastern Afghanistan have said Soviet troops inflicted great destruction. Some earlier rebel claims of casualties have far exceeded Western intelligence reports.

In a statement issued at Peshawar, near the border with Afghanistan, the rebels said: "As a result of Soviet bombing and other atrocities, 300,000 Afghan citizens had to leave their houses, while 40,000, including women and children, were killed."

A SIMILAR REBEL claim reported by China's official news agency, Xinhua, said: "The Russians had not only destroyed cities, villages, and massacred children, women, and the old people by employing the most deadly weapons, but also had used poisonous gases and bacterial materials to eliminate the Moslems."

The Moslem rebels also claimed to have killed nearly 250 Soviet troops and to have captured Soviet weapons and shot down Soviet jets in fighting in the southeastern, southwestern, and eastern portions of Afghanistan. Those claims, like the others, could not be authenticated.

In the heaviest fighting, the rebels claimed to have killed 200 Soviet troops in the southeastern province of Ghazni, destroyed six Soviet tanks, shot down three military aircraft, and captured several Soviet paratroopers, 100 small weapons, five machine guns, and ammu-

nition.

MEANWHILE, THE official Soviet news agency Tass quoted an Afghan government official as saying that "security forces are fully in control of the situation" in Kabul, the Afghan capital, and that the curfew there was being shortened.

"In connection with the further normalization of the situation in the capital, the ministry of the interior has decided to reduce the curfew from 10 p.m. to 4:30 a.m.," Tass said.

Authorities imposed a round-the-clock curfew after anti-Soviet rioting in Kabul on Feb. 22. A few days later, the curfew was made dusk-to-dawn, and on March 6 it was set at 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.

The Soviet troops, now believed to number approximately 80,000, were sent into Afghanistan in December to back a government coup and remained to help the Afghan army fight Moslem rebels.